



## Office of the State Superintendent of Education

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MAYOR ADRIAN M. FENTY

July 19, 2010

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to let you to a survey that will be conducted in the District's public schools this fall and encourage your child to participate. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a survey of middle and high school students conducted as part of a national effort by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor health-risk behaviors which cause significant health risks during youth and adulthood. Having accurate information about these behaviors in the District allows us to plan for and meet our children's needs.

Your child's school was selected to participate in the 2011 YRBS, given in fall of the 2010-2011 school year, and your child may be selected to participate. The survey will ask students in grades 6 through 12 about their nutrition, physical activity, injuries, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. It will also ask about sexual behaviors that cause HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy. The survey takes about 35 minutes for students to complete.

There is no risk for your child to participate in this survey. Your student can answer all questions honestly, as the survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students will not put their names on the survey and cannot be identified. The information from each student's survey will be combined with other student responses from other DC schools and will be used to set policy priorities and direct local funding. The information collected will also be part of the national data released by CDC. Each school district will also receive a report summarizing the responses of their students' surveys. Just like the report for DC and the nation, this report will not identify individual students.

The survey is completely voluntary, but we would like every selected student to participate. No action will be taken against the school, you, or your child if your child does not take part. Students can skip any questions they do not wish to answer or stop participating in the survey at any point without penalty. A copy of the 2009 YRBS can be seen on OSSE's Wellness and Nutrition website at <http://www.osse.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view.a.1224.Q.564084.PM.1.asp#1> and a copy of the 2011 YRBS will be available at your child's school office in September 2010. If, for any reason, you do not want your child to participate, please fill out the attached form, mark "no, my child may not take part in this survey," **return it to the school as soon as possible, but no later than September 30, 2010.**

More information about the YRBS can be found on the enclosed fact sheet. If your child's teacher or principal cannot answer your questions about the survey, please call Veronica Whycoff at (202) 481-3939 or email at [Veronica.Whycoff@dc.gov](mailto:Veronica.Whycoff@dc.gov). The results of the YRBS survey will help your child, and other children in the future, by assisting policymakers and others determine the most effective way to direct resources. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

Attachments



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## YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this form and know what the survey is about.

☐ NO, my child may not take part in this survey.

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_





### Youth Risk Behavior Survey Fact Sheet

- Q. Why is the survey being done?**  
**A.** The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) will use the survey results to help measure how many youth practice health risk behaviors. The survey results also will be used to create school health policy and programs to help reduce these behaviors.
- Q. Are sensitive questions asked?**  
**A.** Yes. Some questions are sensitive. AIDS, HIV infection, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are major health problems. Sexual intercourse and intravenous drug use are behaviors that increase the risk of contracting HIV. The only way to learn if youth are at risk is to ask questions about these behaviors. Attempted suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, and weapon-carrying also may be sensitive topics. Questions are written in a direct but sensitive way.
- Q. Will students' names be used or linked to the surveys?**  
**A.** No. The survey has been designed to protect your child's privacy. Students do not put their name on the survey.
- Q. Do students take the survey more than once to see how their behaviors change?**  
**A.** No. Each year a new sample of schools and students is picked. Students who take part one year cannot be tracked because their names are not on the survey.
- Q. How was my child picked to be in the survey?**  
**A.** A class your child is in was selected randomly to participate, and all students in that class are being asked to participate. A total of 3,000 students in grades 6 through 12 from all District of Columbia Public and Public Charter schools will be randomly selected to participate.
- Q. How long does it take to fill out the survey? Does the survey include a physical test?**  
**A.** One class period is needed to fill out the survey, which has 99 questions for the high school survey and 58 questions for the middle school survey. The survey does not include a physical test or exam.
- Q. Can I see the questions my student will be asked?**  
**A.** Yes, a copy of the survey can be obtained by contacting your child's school.
- Q. What if my child or I would like to learn more about resources and supports for youth around these topics?**  
**A.** Following the survey every child that participates in the YRBS will receive a resource sheet that lists schools personnel, city agencies, and community based organization that can provide information and support to both youth and their caregivers. A copy of this resource sheet will be available at your child's school for you to review as well.
- Q. Who supports this survey?**  
**A.** This survey is supported by many organizations interested in the health of youth. It is also supported by many national organizations. People from more than 100 state and local health and education agencies and 19 federal agencies helped develop the survey.
- Q. How will the information from the surveys be used?**  
**A.** This combined information will be used to set policy priorities and direct funding locally and nationally. Combined results from this survey can be viewed in the spring of 2011 at the DC Office of the State Superintendent's website at [www.osse.dc.gov](http://www.osse.dc.gov). Nationally, the combined information will be used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and when released can be seen at [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm).
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